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SUBJECT: CAMEROON: Environmental Update

11. SUMMARY (U): Embassy Yaounde has an active environmental engagement, both within the Embassy community and around Cameroon. This work has included workshops, tree plantings, and donations to park rangers. End Summary

World Environmental Day

12. (U) In collaboration with USAID-funded Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) and the Network for the Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa (NESDA), post hosted a World Environment Day workshop on June 4, 2009. Experts from research institutions, government ministries and non-governmental organization spoke on how climate change has affected Cameroon. The event also featured a documentary on Northern Cameroon's drought and desertification problems, produced by the British High Commission. The Ambassador gave remarks which received extensive media coverage.

A "Greener" Embassy

13. (U) Post's Facilities Maintenance (FM) section is working hard to secure membership in the League of Green Embassies. Post has sponsored a large tree planting project across Embassy grounds, inviting the Minister of Forests and Fauna to help plant trees. FM has set up beehives on embassy grounds in order to facilitate cross-pollination for plants. Packing materials such as wooden crates and boxes are reused as much as possible. The landscaping contractor for post also recycles wood shavings and sawdust from the carpentry shop into mulch. FM has received funding to utilize Solar Power for heating of the Swimming Pool. The section has converted from incandescent to all compact fluorescent lamps and received buy-in from the RSO Shop to utilize more energy efficient fluorescent light fixtures in the residential areas rather than high-energy consuming light fixtures like Mercury Vapor or Quartz Halogen.

14. U) Post's environmental working group has also implemented several projects during the last year. The most recent was a "call to action" email to embassy employees, asking them to "think green" at work and home and providing tips. Employees were told how to print using recycled paper and to recycle magazines.

USG funded projects

15. (U) Post is funding several environmentally-related projects at the moment. The Ambassador's Self-Help Fund is funding a tree planting project around Benoue National Park, which the Ambassador inaugurated this week with a tree planting ceremony. Post is in the process of finalizing a large-scale tree planting project around Lake Chad in Northern Cameroon. As part of our Food for Progress project, a local non-governmental organization in Northern Cameroon is turning sawdust into briquettes that can be burned as cooking fuel. This project will assist in reducing the number of trees cut down in that region and also check desertification. The Defense

Attach office has used \$400,000 to equip and train park rangers in two major national parks with motorcycles and radios in order to facilitate the fight against illegal logging and poaching.

¶16. (U) Peace Corps Cameroon is signing this week a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Forests and Fauna, in order to have volunteers working in ecotourism and other environmentally-related projects. Peace Corps hopes to have a few volunteers working in this area beginning this summer.

Comment

¶17. (U) Embassy Yaounde is trying to increasingly engage on environmental issues, but is hindered by the lack of resources for projects. Post's multiple agencies are cooperating on this issue, as shown in this cable. The bulk of our work has been in rural communities or within the Embassy community. Within additional resources, post could make an even larger impact on this front.

GARVEY